

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2346

As Reported by House Committee On:
Ways & Means

Title: An act relating to crisis residential centers.

Brief Description: Concerning crisis residential centers.

Sponsors: Representative Kagi.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Ways & Means: 4/14/09, 4/18/09 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Revises definition of the "secure facility" crisis residential centers to include only those Crisis Residential Centers (CRCs) located within or adjacent to a juvenile detention center.
- Maintains five-day limit on Secure CRCs and replaces the five-day maximum for CRCs with a 15 day aggregate maximum stay.
- Removes separate staffing ratios for CRC and Secure CRCs and establishes a minimum of two staff when youth are present.
- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to adopt rules that maximize the utilization of resources and requires the rules to be consistent with the intent of the enabling legislation.
- Clarifies that the DSHS is only required to provide CRC and Secure CRCs services if funds are appropriated or available for that specific purpose.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 22 members: Representatives Linville, Chair; Ericks, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dammeier, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Haigh, Hinkle,

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Hunt, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Pettigrew, Priest, Ross, Schmick, Seaquist and Sullivan.

Staff: Melissa Palmer (786-7388)

Background:

In 1995 Washington implemented policies for at-risk youth known as the Becca Bill, Chapter 312, Laws of 1995 (E2SSB 5439). The policies included court intervention for at-risk youth and provisions for mandatory treatment of youth with chemical dependency problems. The bill also established secure crisis residential centers.

Crisis residential centers (CRCs) and secure crisis residential centers (SCRCs) are state-funded facilities available 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week and provide a maximum five-day placement for runaway youth or youth in conflict with their families. Staff at the CRCs and SCRCs work to stabilize the youth by referring them and their families to counseling and treatment services.

The SCRCs are designed and operated to prevent youth from leaving the facility without parental or staff permission. Law enforcement officers may transport runaway youth or youth determined to be in dangerous situations to a SCRC. These facilities have locking doors, locking windows, and a secured perimeter designed to prevent the youth from leaving. Generally, youth admitted to a SCRC must remain for a minimum of 24 hours before the youth can be transferred to a less restrictive placement.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) contracts for 44 SCRC beds and 34 CRC beds statewide.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The definition of a "secure facility" is revised to include only CRCs located within or adjacent to a juvenile detention center. All secure CRCs are to be operated in a manner that prevents youth in the secure CRCs from coming in contact with juveniles being held at detention centers. The maximum five-day stay at secure CRCs is retained and the maximum five-day stay for CRCs is replaced by a 15-day maximum. The separate staffing ratios are removed and a minimum of two staff when youth are present is established. The DSHS is directed to develop rules to maximize the utilization of resources and be consistent with the intent of enabling legislation (the Becca Bill). Additionally, the DSHS is directed to develop staff-to-youth ratios to ensure safety, reflect actual bed usage, and allow for flexibility to respond to increases and decreases in bed usage. The DSHS is required to provide crisis residential center services if funds are appropriated, and the DSHS does not have a responsibility to provide the services if funding is not appropriated.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill makes the following changes to the original bill:

- revises the definition of the "secure facility" to include only those CRCs located within or adjacent to a juvenile detention center and requires the secure CRCs to be operated in a manner that youth in secure CRCs do not come in contact with juveniles being held at detention centers;
- maintains five-day maximum stay limit for secure CRCs and replaces the five-day maximum stay for CRCs with a 15-day maximum aggregate limit of stay;
- removes the separate staffing ratios for secure CRCs and establishes a minimum of two staff when youth are present; and
- directs the DSHS to develop rules for staff-to-youth ratios to ensure safety, reflect actual bed use, and allow for flexibility in response to increases and decreases in bed use.

The substitute bill also specifies that rules must maximize the utilization of resources and requires the rules to be consistent with the intent of the enabling legislation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill was introduced with reluctance but it is an opportunity. There are two types of facilities that are operated in this state: crisis residential centers (CRCs) and secure crisis residential centers (SCRCs). The staffing ratios and admittance requirements or eligibility are very narrow and restrictive. An amendment that would provide for facilities to operate both CRCs and SCRCs and have more reasonable operational requirements is being offered. Some of these facilities have as low as an 8.7 percent occupancy rate. A 10 to 20 percent utilization is not a good use of resources. We need to find a way to serve this population of youth in a much more effective manner.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Kagi, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.